

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIII, Issue No. 352

THURSDAY DECEMBER 18, 2003

www.saipantribune.com 50¢

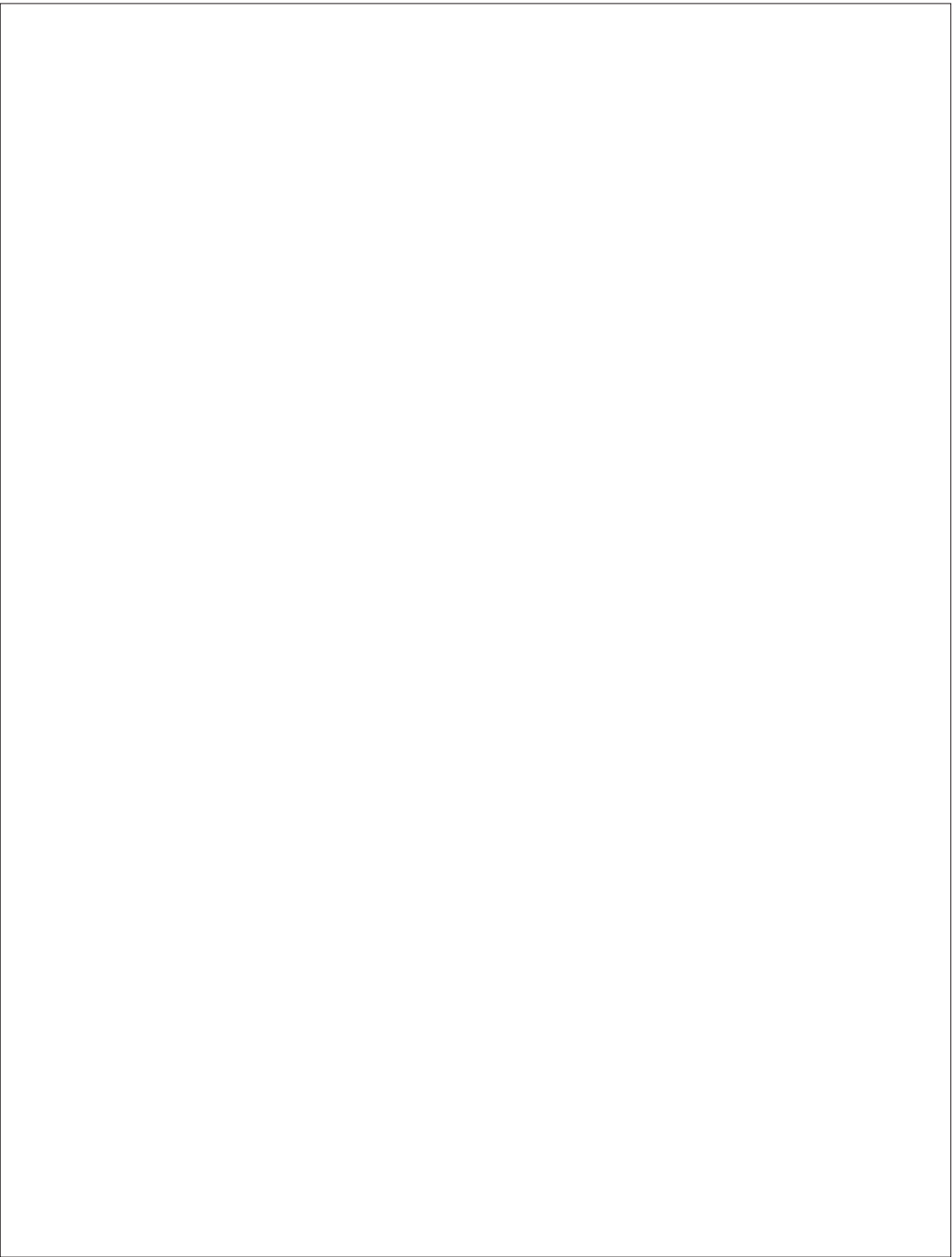
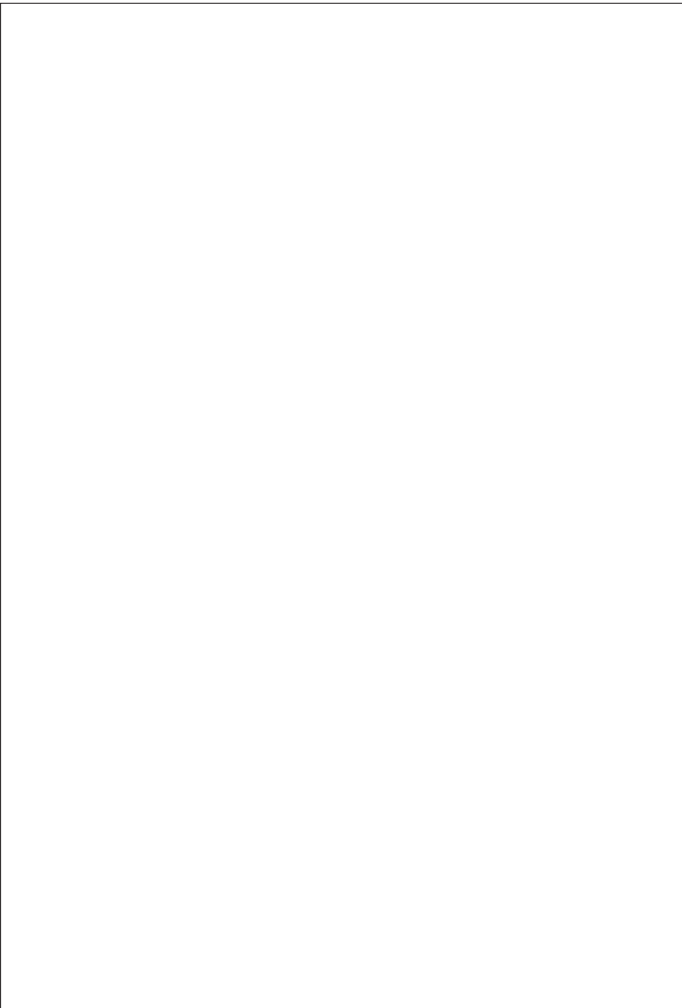
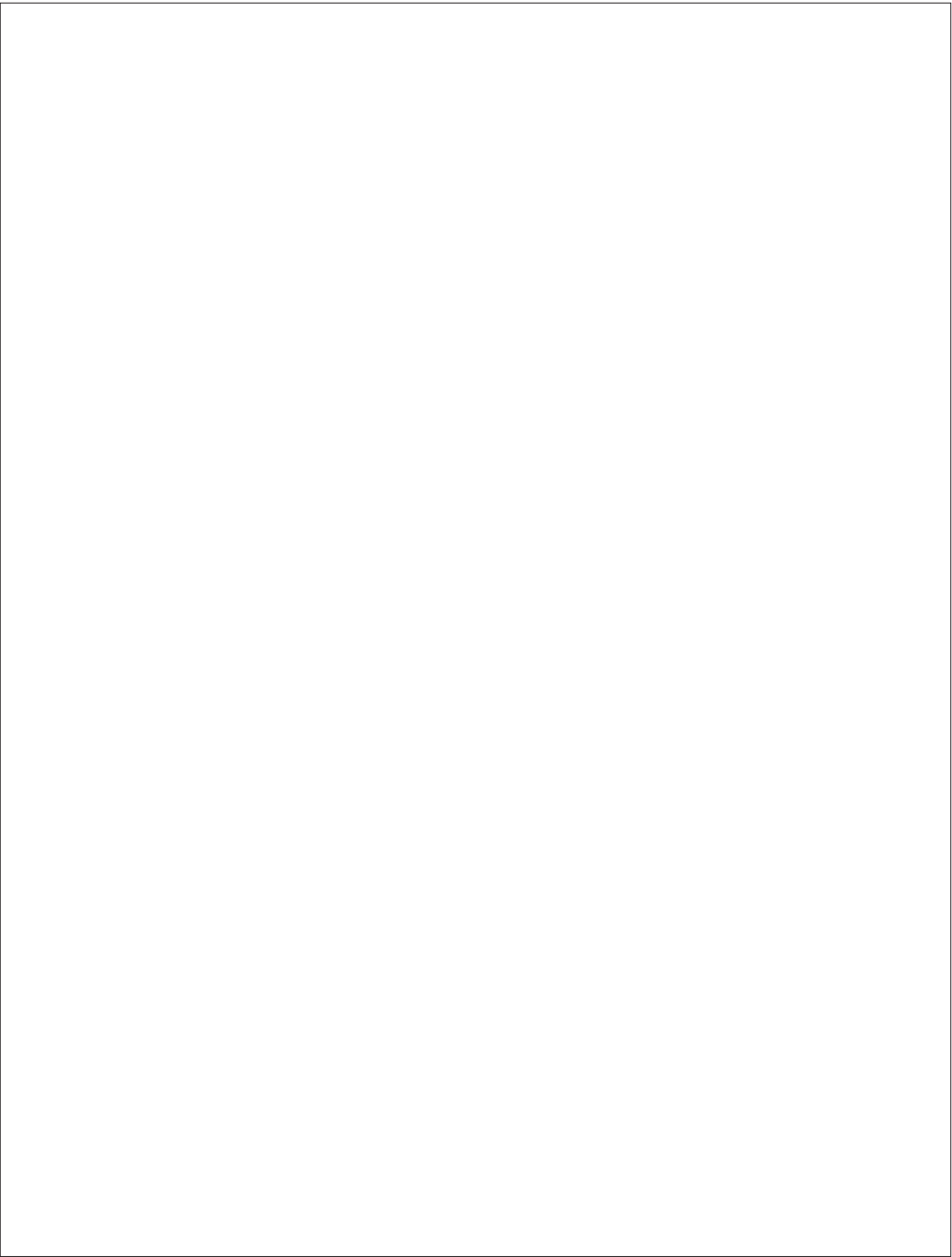
I N S I D E

Local

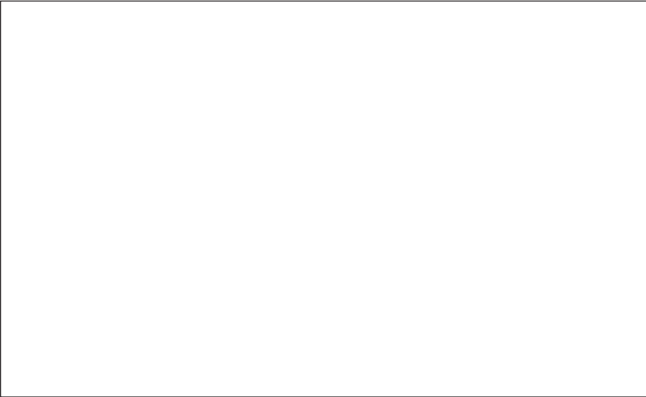


Salas

WDI-JVA




WEATHER FORECAST




PICTURE TIME: 2:25 A.M., DECEMBER 17, 2003
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.


A monsoon trough extends from 6N130E through a tropical disturbance near 8N145E and finally to near 5N160E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms associated with the disturbance are found in the Mariana islands as well as between Yap and Chuuk or between 4N and 16N from 139E to 153E. Just east of the monsoon trough, a surface trough of low pressure continues to near the equator at 168E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are developing north and east of the trough or within 100 miles either side of a line from 9N160E to the equator at 173E, including Kosrae. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms across portions of the Marshall islands, between 4N and 16N from 170E to 180.




SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Cloudy and breezy with scattered showers, some locally heavy, and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
Winds: East at 20-25 mph. Gusting in 35 mph in showers.
Temperature: Lows near 78. Highs near 86.




GUAM AND ROTA
Cloudy and breezy with scattered showers, some locally heavy, and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
Winds: East at 20-25 mph. Gusting in 35 mph in showers.
Temperature: Lows near 78. Highs near 86.




PALAU
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt.




POHNPEI
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.




YAP AND ULITHI
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt.






















KOSRAE
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Southeast at 10 kt.



CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers with a slight chance of thunderstorms.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.



MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
 Auckland	Cloudy	61F (16C)	49F (9C)
 Beijing	Sunny	44F (7C)	26F (-3C)
 Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	74F (23C)	61F (16C)
 Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	86F (30C)	72F (22C)
 London, England	Cloudy	56F (13C)	45F (7C)
 Los Angeles	Cloudy	69F (21C)	51F (11C)
 Manila	Cloudy	88F (31C)	71F (22C)
 Melbourne	Sunny	73F (23C)	54F (12C)
 Miami	Partly Cloudy	84F (29C)	75F (24C)
 New York, NY	Cloudy	52F (11C)	48F (9C)
 Osaka	Rain	54F (12C)	46F (8C)
 Paris	Cloudy	53F (12C)	41F (5C)
 Pusan	Rain	58F (14C)	43F (6C)
 Rome	Partly Cloudy	55F (13C)	39F (4C)
 Salem, Oregon	Rain	54F (12C)	38F (3C)
 San Francisco	Sunny	64F (18C)	47F (5C)
 Seoul	Rain	52F (11C)	45F (7C)
 Tokyo	Rain	55F (13C)	49F (9C)
 Washington, DC	Cloudy	60F (16C)	48F (9C)

Guerrero: Yangetmai has the right to question Teacher Rep poll result

Board of Education member Herman Guerrero commented yesterday that Marianas High School teacher James Yangetmai has the prerogative to question the results of the recently concluded Teacher Representative election, which the Association of Commonwealth Teacher candidate lost to Kagman High School teacher



Guerrero

Ambrose Bennett. “Anyone [who] is running can always question [the election result]. I think they [administration] need to ensure whether he has valid points or not. If it’s not valid, then at least you settle the issue. And there’s no cloud hanging over the whole process. “It’s a democratic process. People who lose sometimes ask or think there are discrepancies or procedures [that were] not followed. If that is the case then the people that are conducting the election needs to refute them and say that this is what we did, and this the process and the procedures,” said the official, who recently lost the BOE chairmanship to Roman Benavente. Yangetmai, who lagged behind Bennett by 16 votes in Monday’s poll, hinted of possible vote manipulation, casting

doubts on the election’s credibility. ACT claimed the process was not valid and fair, as it allegedly lacked transparency. The group raised the absence of its own representative at the polling center. “I guess in any election, there’s a need to be clear on the process and procedures. If the one who lost is questioning the validity of the election then perhaps they need to revisit [the issue] and make sure there’s no doubt that what they certified is true and correct. The process has to be followed and it has to be transparent so nobody can question it,” insisted Guerrero, who called on House legislators yesterday. The BOE member representing Saipan was also curious over the dismal turnout in Monday’s election.

“When you only have 28 percent [of] eligible voters voting, that’s an extremely low turnout. With this kind of turnout, there’s no clear mandate from the teachers. So it’s questionable. One can raise the question why you don’t have many who voted? There’s a lot of questions why,” he asserted. Gov. Juan N. Babauta proclaimed Bennett’s victory on Tuesday, a day after the Teacher Representative poll was held here Monday and simultaneously on Rota and Tinian. The chief executive stressed that teacher representation in the BOE is constitutionally mandated. He said that concerns raised over the selection has prompted his office to hold the election so that all public school teachers in the CNMI could choose a representative that would truly represent them.

Babauta credited the Public School System, the BOE, the

PSS legal counsel, the Attorney General’s Office and the administration for putting together a fair and objective selection process. Of the 500 full-time teachers who were eligible to vote, Babauta confirmed that only 142 teachers or 28 percent cast their votes. He lamented the minimal participation. According to the breakdown, Yangetmai garnered 62 votes while Bennett gained 78 votes. Two ballots were reportedly cast without votes. Babauta explained that only full time teachers were eligible to vote in this election, quoting PSS’ definition of full time teachers as any person who is employed by the Public School System and has the primary responsibility for the education, instruction or provides related services for one or more students. *(Marian A. Maraya)*

Paras signs payment schedule with CHC

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Paras Enterprises president Juan T. Guerrero has signed a payment schedule agreement with the Department of Public Health only last week. Earlier, Paras legal counsel Mark Smith clarified that no agreement had been reached yet as of Jan. 8 as previously agreed by both parties. Guerrero said yesterday that Paras signed the payment schedule only last Jan. 14. On January 16, he said Paras received an additional \$100,000 payment from DPH. Based on the schedule, the department will give another payment of \$80,000 to Paras on Jan. 30 and some \$50,000 on Feb. 13. Guerrero said Paras and DPH continue to negotiate for the \$50,000 billing. “We have submitted our billing for \$50,000. I don’t know why they’re disputing our billing now when in the last six years,

they never did,” said Guerrero. He said Paras submitted \$248,000 billing to DPH as of Jan. 7, 2004. Based on the schedule, the DPH only acknowledged some \$230,000. “There is some flexibility but we’ll still pursue what is really due us,” said Guerrero, adding that the department itself is charging Paras some \$11,000 for outstanding hospital bills. This amount would be assessed against the last payment to Paras. “We’ll settle that but I’m not really sure how much we owe them so we have to discuss that,” he said. Guerrero also clarified that he has not signed any expiration transfer agreement with the department, which would “legalize” the transfer of Paras employees to the Commonwealth Health Center. Some authorities, however, said that a consensual transfer agreement with Paras is no longer needed

since its contracts with employees provide that their termination of employment goes with Paras’ contract termination with CHC. Both parties have agreed to finalize their payment schedule in view of the DPH’ shift to direct hiring of nursing staff effective Jan. 1, 2004. Paras and other agencies’ contracts with CHC ended on Dec. 31, 2003 but transfer negotiations dragged along pending the settlement of the government’s debt with the companies and the lack of funded FTEs or positions at the department. On Jan. 2, Finance released \$100,000 each to Paras and Saipan Employment Agency Services as partial payment. The government terminated its contracts with agencies on the belief that direct hiring would result in better delivery of health care and boost employee morale. The direct hiring aims to implement a uniform pay for all nursing staff.

DEQ heightens illegal dumping campaign

The Division of Environmental Quality warned that it would impose a fine on anyone caught illegally dumping trash on the islands. DEQ director John I. Castro Jr. urged the public to respect the no littering signs the agency has installed at beach parks and other areas. “We will assess a fine. Our regulations allow us to impose up to \$25,000 per day of violation,” Castro said. The DEQ hopes that the move will deter the public from illegally disposing of trash and household wastes. Castro said trash should be disposed of at the Lower Base

Refuse Transfer Station or the Marpi landfill. “Help us. It’s not just the DEQ’s job to keep Saipan beautiful but it’s also the public’s responsibility,” Castro added. The Environmental Inter-agency Cleanup Operation Team, of which DEQ is a member, and volunteers from non-profit group MOVER recently conducted an emergency cleanup in Garapan’s Makaka beach site, which had deteriorated due to illegal dumping. According to EICOT chairman Benny Pangelinan, people just ignored the DEQ’s no-littering sign at the site. *(John Ravelo)*

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Opinion

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIII, Issue No. 352

Published daily at 2/F Century Insurance Building,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

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EDITORIAL

3 men arrested for alleged assault

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Authorities arrested Monday night three men who have been a subject of intensive investigations by law enforcers since November 2003 when a 43-year-old man lodged a complaint against them.

Police department spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said Martin F. Borja, 38; Chris W. Taimanglo, 20; and William M. Faisao, 19, were arrested based on the arrest warrants issued against them by Judge Juan Lizama.

Blas said COPPS officers Jesse Seman and Sandy Hambros arrested the three suspects in connection with a Nov. 16, 2003, assault case lodged by Saburo Stewart, 43.

Lizama issued the warrants after the police released the results of its investigation on the case. The officers immediately served the warrants to the suspects. All three were brought to the Adult Correctional facility in Susupe where they were booked and detained pending bail hearing.

The investigation report showed that the police department received a call for assistance around 1:28am of Nov. 16, 2003, due to a disturbance in the house of Stewart in Kagman III area. Medics were also dispatched due to injuries sustained by the victim.

According to the report, the victim and two of the three suspects were involved in a fight outside the victim's house. During the squabble, the suspects used rocks, a machete, and a baseball bat to allegedly attack the victim, causing serious injuries.

Stewart reportedly sustained lacerations on the back, legs, and arms, as well as other cuts and bruises on his body.

After the investigation, probers determined the culpability of the three suspects and asked that arrest warrants be issued against them.

The suspects are now facing disturbing the peace, assault and battery, assault with dangerous weapons, and criminal mischief charges.

Taiwanese boat seized off New Caledonia

A Taiwanese fishing boat has been intercepted south of New Caledonia for fishing illegally.

The French high commission in the New Caledonia capitol of Noumea says the ship had been spotted by a French surveillance aircraft and an inspection showed it carried dozens of tons of fresh and frozen fish.

The interception comes just days after the captain of another Taiwanese fishing boat was jailed for six months and fined almost US\$200,000 for fishing illegally. (RNZI/PIR)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION

Saipan Southern High School students gather around Gov. Juan N. Babauta during the chief executive's recent visit at the campus, in line with the administration's education program. Babauta has been putting emphasis on public education as an important tool in the eventual recovery of the local economy.

MPLA board in limbo due to lack of quorum

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The lack of a quorum on the Board of Directors of the Marianas Public Lands Authority is stymieing efforts to move ahead on critical projects, including 36 new offers for land compensation that require the board's approval.

Only two members remain on the Board—chairperson, Ana Demapan-Castro and vice chairman Manny Villagomez—following the resignation of a member and term expiration of another.

Member Pedro M. Atalig resigned from the board effective Jan. 1, 2004, while member

Pedro Igitol's term expired on Dec. 31, 2003.

The board is composed of five seats, with one representative each from Tinian and Rota and three from Saipan. The CNMI Constitution also provides that one of the directors should be of Carolinian descent, while another should represent women.

At the moment, Demapan-Castro represents Saipan and the women's sector, while Villagomez represents Tinian. This means nobody is representing Rota, the Carolinians, and two seats for Saipan.

This, even as the MPLA has already readied 36 new offers for land compensation that re-

quire the board's approval.

"We have to get the board's approval before we can make the offer but the board can't possibly meet right now for lack of quorum," said MPLA commissioner Henry S. Hofschneider.

The board normally holds a regular meeting on the third Thursday of the month.

Hofschneider said that some names have been floated for appointment by the governor to the board. He declined to identify them.

Meantime, he said that 38 landowners have accepted the MPLA's initial offers and are like likely to get their compensation within the month.

"Once Finance puts the

money in MPLA's special account, we can start cutting checks," he said.

Hofschneider said that MPLA is offering "just and fair" compensation to landowners.

The MPLA board approved 75 folders for immediate land compensation last month. This came soon after the CNMI government floated a \$40-million bond, with the proceeds to be used primarily to settle the longstanding land claims by individuals against the government. The first batch of claims included acquisition of rights-of-way.

The Land Compensation Act mandates the government to prioritize the payment for lands used for rights-of-way,

then ponding basins, and later wetlands and other claims.

The payment to landowners is based on the valuation at the time of taking by the Commonwealth.

The MPLA has listed some 120 eligible land claimants in the CNMI.

Of the \$40-million bond, only about \$27 million will be used for land compensation, as \$11 million has been allotted to fund a pending prison project. The bond's Hawaii-based underwriter also deducted \$1.5 million from the total amount for cost of the bond issuance.

The government is given 30 years to pay off the loan at an annual interest of 6.75 percent.

cars unlimited
pls. pick up neg

Good Housekeeping

Nails for a carpenter

By JEANNE MARIE LASKAS
THE WASHINGTON POST

This all started a week ago. I called Dan, my contractor, to ask him a routine question about window casing options. He wasn't home, so I left a message.

Now, Dan isn't just any old contractor. Dan is a best-kept-secret master-carpenter/dream-contractor. He is a lone angel walking amid the darkness of contractors who promise and leave, promise and leave, never call, leave you with sewage gas leaking into your attic. He is the type you watch with utter amazement as he commits all of his energy and all of his devotion to the perfect patio door installation, and you think: I am never letting go of this man.

This happened last summer as Dan went about transforming my spider hole of a kitchen into a sparkling, sun-drenched food-prep heaven. "I will never let you go," I said to him, bribing him with steaks and drawings my girls made of "Uncle Dan." I asked him to

please take on the larger job of converting our confusing old farmhouse into one that at least makes a tiny bit of logical sense. To wit: one front door instead of five. He said he would. He spent several days just staring at my house. Staring and studying and trying to figure out what the heck happened over the past century as farmer after farmer added a porch, enclosed it, added a porch, enclosed it, as the house grew ever westward.

"This house," Dan would say. "This house!" But he never gave up. He began a master plan and suggested we divide the work into smaller projects that he could do over the next few years. He said he would "put me on the schedule."

The schedule? "I am a jealous woman," I said to him, explaining that I didn't want to be on a schedule. I wanted him all to myself.

"I know," he said. "I know." I learned of the other women. I learned of a previous customer who had recently moved away, and who now was prepared to

import Dan over two state lines. I learned of her friend, who had lured Dan with a two-story addition project.

"My house needs you more than their houses need you!" I pleaded.

"I know," he said. "I know." But he had committed to them. And he assured me he was committing to me. He said he was nothing if not a loyal man. And then he was gone, returning sporadically over these past months to go over plans. Sometimes Dan would bring along his kids, who like to play here, and his wife, Jennifer, a kind and strong soul. On my birthday last fall, my husband surprised me with the gift of Jennifer, who works as a manicurist: She sat under our maple tree and did my nails and my girls' nails, never once complaining as my 4-year-old requested a drawing on each fingernail, ending with a unicorn-above-rainbow on her left pinky.

This is probably not your average contractor-customer relationship. No, this has evolved into something far more elaborate.

So naturally I was surprised last week when Dan never returned my message. I called again. Jennifer answered. "Oh, you didn't hear," she said, with exhaustion in her voice. My heart sank. She told me Dan was on a roof, slipped on some ice, got a good sliding start, then sailed 17 feet down onto a slab of cement. He broke both elbows, a wrist, maybe a shoulder, his nose, who knows what else. "I'm so ... sorry," I said. "How can I help?"

"Win the lottery?" she said. "He needs a lot of surgeries."

He's self-employed. Like all those Americans you hear politicians debate about, he has no health insurance. He'll be out of work, and in and out of hospitals, for months. How does a family absorb such a blow? "I'm going to work really hard," Jennifer said, of the manicure business she runs out of her home. "I'm going to ... increase my client base."

Dan called me the day he got out of the hospital. His broken nose made his voice unrecognizable. "I'm sorry

I didn't call you back till now," he said, ridiculously.

"Look, I want to help," I said.

"I'm going to get better," he said. "Just believe in me. That's the most help."

That was too simple. I hung up, wondered what on earth I could do. I thought about getting a manicure, maybe a French manicure, or something really elaborate. When there is an important person in your life who is suddenly in need, you'll do anything to help, wondering how come everything you think of seems so puny.

A day later I got an e-mail. A woman who said she lives two states away. The other woman! She had tracked me down. And a few of the other women, too. "We're starting a fund," she wrote, asking me to participate. "Of course!" I said, got out my checkbook, and all day I walked around thinking about the way loyalty begets loyalty.

Tomorrow I'm taking my girls over, and anyone else I can enlist. We'll get manicures and pedicures, and buy gift certificates for friends.



Fun with faucets: Look Ma, no hands

By JURA KONCIUS
THE WASHINGTON POST

Hands-free faucets, a staple of restrooms in airports, movie theaters and other public places, are now trickling into the domestic market, particularly in powder rooms and children's bathrooms.

"Since the 1970s, these faucets have been used in commercial locations because of hygiene and ease of use," says Melissa Birdsong, director of trend

forecasting and design for Lowe's home improvement stores. "As people have become comfortable with the use of hands-free technology, they started asking for it for their homes."

Although hands-free faucets such as the e-Flow line from Delta must be special-ordered at Lowe's and sell for about \$250 and up, Birdsong says, sales are on the rise. Hands-free models have caught on not only because universal design is becoming more popular, but also because manufactur-

ers have improved the installation technology. Consumers can pre-set water temperatures (including a non-scalding feature) and stylish new models are more suitable for a family bathroom than a gas station restroom.

"Now these things have a cool factor," says Birdsong. "I think they're going to become very popular as the styling, ease of use and the price reach a point of acceptability."

What about those automatic toilets? She says no rush to hands-free flush.

The latest portable desk set

By JURA KONCIUS
THE WASHINGTON POST

Between cell phones, beepers and laptops, people seem to be taking their office wherever they go. A cool metal Fold-Away Desk by Russell+Hazel is equally portable. Or it can be bolted to the wall to keep supplies handy in a home office, kitchen or wherever you set up shop—open if you want to see it all, closed when you want to put work out of mind. The 15-by-20-inch industrial gray metal surface is magnetic so it can serve as a memo board when it's closed.

Christine Plantan, founder of the stylish Minneapolis office supply company Russell+Hazel, says she

first spotted an old version of the desk at an office supply surplus store. Turns out that model has been manufactured for years for use in factories to organize time cards next to time clocks and phones.

"We ordered some and hung them on walls all over our offices," says Plantan. "We discovered it's a great place to put a laptop, especially in apartments with no room for large desks." Plantan is planning to come out soon with Fold-Aways in different colors; wouldn't one look fab in pink?

Available at www.russellandhazel.com for \$135, the desk comes equipped with cool supplies like polka dot Post-it Notes, correspondence cards, colorful magnets and pencils (888-254-5837).



Business





World



Across the Globe

Security Council sets sanctions deadline

By EDITH M. LEDERER
AP WRITER

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The Security Council set a March 31 deadline Friday for nearly 100 countries to report on their enforcement of sanctions against al-Qaida and the Taliban—or be publicly named and shamed.

A resolution adopted unanimously gives the committee monitoring sanctions new powers to assess what states are doing to implement the asset freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo against the two groups and terror leader Osama bin Laden.

The council has been concerned that nearly 100 of the 191 U.N. member states have failed to submit reports on their actions to enforce sanctions.

The resolution sets a March 31 deadline for all countries that have not submitted reports to do so, or to explain

in writing their reasons for not responding. It asks the sanctions committee to give the council a list of countries that don't comply by that date.

Chile's U.N. Ambassador Heraldo Munoz, the committee chairman, told reporters after the vote that he will publicly identify countries that don't submit a report and say whether it's a lack of political will, because of technical problems, or for some other reason.

He said earlier this month that identifying the countries not complying would be more than a matter of "naming and shaming." The council must also close loopholes, adopt tougher measures, and stress to countries that enforcing sanctions is mandatory, he said.

"I think there's a strong message to countries to comply," said Munoz, who is also this month's Security Council president.

The resolution reiterates "the urgency for all states to comply with their existing obligations" to implement sanctions and to ensure that their domestic laws and administrative measures allow assets to be frozen, travel to be banned, and arms shipments to be halted.

It calls on states "to move vigorously and decisively to cut the flows of funds and other financial assets and economic resources to individuals and entities associated with the al-Qaida organization, Osama bin Laden and/or the Taliban."

This should be done by implementing internationally accepted standards for combating the financing of terrorism, including preventing the abuse of non-profit organizations, it said.

The Security Council shifted sanctions from the government of

Afghanistan to bin Laden, al-Qaida and remnants of the Taliban in January 2002, after a U.S.-led force ousted the Taliban.

U.N. sanctions require all nations to impose a travel ban and an arms embargo and freeze the assets of individuals and groups on a list issued by the sanctions committee.

While 4,000 individuals linked to al-Qaida and the Taliban have been detained in over 102 countries, the U.N. list of individuals and entities subject to sanctions has just 398 names.

The resolution urges all states to provide names for the list.

U.S. deputy ambassador James Cunningham said the resolution supports Munoz' efforts to improve the enforcement of sanctions.

"The original resolution set up a good set of measures," he said. "We

want to see if we can improve how those are implemented, and we'll then look whether there are further steps that we or others can propose to the council to strengthen the (sanctions) regime as a whole."

To assist the sanctions committee, the resolution establishes a New York-based monitoring team for 18 months. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is asked to consult with the committee and appoint eight members to the team with expertise ranging from financing terrorism to arms embargoes and the use of couriers and alternative remittance systems.

The resolution calls for the team to deliver its first report to the committee on implementation of sanctions by the 191 U.N. member states by July 31, its second by Dec. 15, 2005 and its third by June 30, 2005.

Audit finds billions in China misused

SHANGHAI, China (AP)—Audits aimed at ferreting out corruption in China uncovered \$8 billion in misused or embezzled funds and widespread irregularities that produced "serious losses" of state assets, the government said Friday.

Auditors investigated 130,000 state businesses and offices last year as part of the communist leadership's campaign against the pervasive graft that has soured public faith in the government.

Li Jinhua, minister of the State Auditing Administration, told officials attending a national conference Friday that government auditors found larger-

than-reported losses in the accounts of the State Power Corp., the former national power monopoly that was dismantled last year.

Irregularities at the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China - one of the country's biggest state-owned banks—included housing and auto loans granted to organizations or individuals using false documents and excessive lending to local governments, Li said in an account posted on the audit office's Web site.

The bank suffered "serious losses" from illegal loans granted by staff and related companies, it said without giving figures. The report also cited a "big

batch" of major economic crimes but did not elaborate.

Li has long criticized officials for diverting government subsidies and spending lavishly on offices, private villas and stock speculation, among other abuses.

As a result of the audits, \$2.9 billion of the \$8 billion in misused funds were returned to the government, and the cases of 749 officials were referred to prosecutors for criminal investigations, the audit office said.

In recent months, thousands of Chinese officials and managers of state companies have been punished in a renewed effort to root out rampant abuse of power.

Envoy hopeful about N. Korea talks

BEIJING (AP)—A top U.S. diplomat praised China on Friday for its efforts to reconvene negotiations about North Korea's nuclear program, expressing hope that a new round of six-party talks to resolve the dispute could be held without much further delay.

But after a day of meeting with Chinese leaders, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage wouldn't cite a potential date for the talks, saying only that Washington and Beijing expect they would be "soon."

The decision on when talks would be resumed "seems to lie in Pyongyang rather than Beijing," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Friday, referring to the North Korean government.

"We are working with our partners in these talks to try to prepare another round," Boucher said. But "sitting down at the table again requires the consent of Pyongyang."

The first round ended in August without a settlement or a date to meet

again. The talks involve the United States, China, Japan, Russia and the two Koreas.

An Australian government delegation was on its way to North Korea on Friday to persuade Pyongyang to agree to a second round, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said. Australia, a close U.S. ally, has diplomatic links with North Korea.

"A constructive, diplomatic solution to North Korea's nuclear crisis, which escalated just over a year ago, is vital for the security of our region and stability in North Asia and among our allies and top trading partners," said Downer, who was leading the delegation, which will be in Pyongyang until Tuesday.

The nuclear dispute flared in October 2002 when U.S. officials accused North Korea of running the uranium program in violation of a 1994 deal requiring the North to freeze its nuclear facilities. But North Korea has since denied ever having a uranium program.

Official: Plane crashes off Nigeria coast

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP)—A 25- to 30-seat passenger plane plunged into the Atlantic Ocean off Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital, on Friday, an airport official and witnesses said.

There was no sign of any survivors, victims or wreckage. It was unclear how many people were aboard the aircraft.

Air traffic control was trying to determine the origin of the plane, which disappeared beneath the waves, the official at Lagos international airport said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The plane went down along a

busy east-west commercial West African flight path that is also used by multinational oil companies to fly workers to and from facilities in Nigeria's oil delta. No airline reported any planes missing.

Police called for divers to search the seas for survivors, but those plans collapsed because for lack of diving equipment. Fishermen offered to help but later refused when they were told they would not be paid.

A witness, security supervisor Kelvin Ikpeme, said he saw a white,

yellow and blue twin-engine plane "shaking" and wobbling in the sky shortly before the crash.

"I rushed down here and saw smoke. Only the nose was still above the water," Ikpeme said.

The craft soon vanished off Lekki, a neighborhood on the eastern edge of Lagos, Ikpeme and other witnesses said.

A Lagos state official, Leke Pitan, said time had run out to find survivors.

"We're no longer thinking about a rescue. Now we're thinking about a recovery operation," Pitan said.

Bystanders run away as a police helicopter tries to land on a beach, near where a small plane crashed into the ocean, in Lagos, Nigeria, Friday Jan. 30, 2004.

AP



Life & Style

‘American Idol’ reject idolized by web

By MICHELLE LOCKE
AP WRITER

The “American Idol” judges said William Hung bombed with his gotta-see-it-to-believe-it rendition of Ricky Martin’s “She Bangs.”

But rejection turned out to have a silver—maybe even platinum—lining. In the weeks since he got booted by the TV talent show, the 21-year-old Hung has become an insta-Net celebrity, sought after by talk shows, record producers and Idol dreamers everywhere.

By now, unless your TV set is permanently tuned to PBS, you’ve probably seen Hung in action—arms waving over his head, hips following the beat of an entirely different drummer as he cheerfully attacks Martin’s song.

The song fights back; the song wins. And yet the mild-mannered civil engineering student is undeniably charming, his reedy tenor bringing a boyish exuberance to the sexy lyrics.

“I love him! I love him!” a laughing Ellen DeGeneres told her talk show audience after Hung came on to perform an abbreviated version of “Shake Your Bon Bon,” another Martin song (Hung is a huge Ricky fan).

What have people so hung up on Hung?

Is it the shy, toothy smile? The accent?

The dance moves, just a few funks short of funkadelic?

His fans say it’s all that, combined with his fearless—or clueless if you ask caustic “Idol” judge Simon Cowell—pursuit of an unlikely dream.

“He’s not full of himself. He’s just down-to-earth,” says Andrea Michaelian, a San Francisco-area teenager who with a friend created www.williamhung.reallyrules.com. “He’s like an unintentional celebrity so it’s cool.”

Hung, who was born in Hong Kong but moved to Southern California with his family as a child, has always been

interested in music. But he was concentrating on a steadier line of work, studying at the University of California, Berkeley, until he won a dorm talent contest singing, of course, “She Bangs.”

Last September, he decided to try out for “American Idol” in San Francisco, appearing before judges Cowell, Paula Abdul and Randy Jackson.

It didn’t go well. Cowell stopped him with a curt, “You can’t sing, you can’t dance, so what do you want me to say?”

Some contestants argue when they get the Cowell cutoff; others cry. Said Hung, “I already gave my best and I have no regrets at all.”

The judges were disarmed but not swayed by his cheerful sincerity. Producers put the segment on the air as an example of how not to be—part of the show’s appeal, especially in the early rounds of competition, is watching hopefuls crash and burn.

But Hung was different, evoking more support than schadenfreude.

“Everyone’s having fun with it,” says Jared Levy, a fellow UC-Berkeley student. “It’s completely different from everyone else’s auditions who didn’t make it. He said, ‘You know what? That’s OK.’”

Levy, a Cal volleyball player, was so impressed by Hung that he invited the 21-year-old to sing at a game this week, drawing a crowd of hundreds.

“Will! Will! Will!” they screamed as Hung launched into “She Bangs” with the backing of a sextet of nubile young dancers calling themselves The Movement. (A key move turned out to be avoiding getting walked into by Hung.)

The crowd went wild.

“It makes you want to follow your dreams, no matter how bad you are, or other people think you are,” said Danielle Navarre, a Berkeley junior who captured the performance on her digital camera.

Afterward, Hung said his experi-



William Hung, center, performs the Ricky Martin song “She Bangs” during halftime of the University of California’s men’s volleyball game Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2004, at Haas Pavilion in Berkeley, Calif. AP

ences have taught him “a lot about how to handle adversity and how to handle a more high-tempo lifestyle.”

Fame has made it hard for him to walk around campus without someone recognizing him. Some yell out a cheerful “She bangs!” He admits to struggling with his studies.

Still, Hung is determined to graduate as planned and is still calling music his hobby. The music channel Fuse and New York-based record company Koch Entertainment offered him a record contract and music video pro-

duction deal, but the offer, made just after Hung’s volleyball singing gig, drew a polite smile but no immediate acceptance.

He’s grateful for fan support and the thousands of people who have signed online petitions trying to get American Idol to invite Hung back. Reportedly, the show wants him for the “loser” special, “Uncut, Uncensored and Untalented.” Hung was noncommittal about that possibility.

Hung seems to suspect some people are laughing at him, not with him, but

he’s not letting that get him down. He’s taking singing lessons and says every time he sings “She Bangs,” “there’s always something to work on, something to improve.”

There’s a touch of irony there, since some might argue it’s the triumph of enthusiasm over experience that makes Hung so appealing.

But Michaelian is one fan who believes in his pop potential.

“An entertainer is somebody who makes you smile,” she says, “and that’s what he does.”

Jo Dee Messina’s engagement over



Singer Jo Dee Messina’s engagement to road manager Don Muzquiz is over.

Messina said the long, on-again, off-again relationship has come to an end.

Manager Stuart Dill of Refugee Management International said the working relationship between the two will continue.

“We really haven’t been saying much about it, but they are truly dear friends and Don is still working with her,” Dill told The Associated Press Wednesday.

He said Messina, who revealed the breakup to a music magazine, won’t have anything else to say about it.

Dill wouldn’t say who is keeping the seven-carat engagement ring Messina has been wearing for the past several years. “It’s nobody’s business but theirs,” he said.

Messina, a Boston native, has hits that include “That’s the Way,” “Stand Beside Me” and “I’m Alright.” (AP)

Singer Jo Dee Messina, right, is joined by fiancé Don Muzquiz as they arrive for the Academy of Country Music Awards in Universal City, Calif., on May 3, 2000. AP

Television academy shakes up Emmy rules

By LYNN ELBER
AP TELEVISION WRITER

The television academy is shaking up Emmy rules to try to freshen a competition that sees the same shows winning trophies year after year.

As part of changes approved this week by the academy’s Board of Governors, members will have the opportunity to choose up to 10 nominees per category—double the current five.

The top five vote-getters will end up as the nominees in each category, keeping the number of contenders the same as it has been traditionally.

But the mix should be more representative of the growing bounty of programming on cable and newer broadcast channels, academy spokeswoman Pam Ruben Golum said Friday.

“This gives the approximately 12,000 academy members a chance to expand the field of nominees,” she said.

Unlike the Academy Awards, which recognize a new crop of films each year, the Emmys fall into rerun territory because shows are eligible as long as they air original episodes in the Emmy calendar year.

The result has been winning streaks like that of NBC’s White House drama “The West Wing,” named best drama series for the last three consecutive ceremonies.

It makes for impressive records but predictable shows. Observers have also complained that less mainstream fare, such as UPN’s “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” are routinely shut out of major awards.

Faithful get sneak peek at 'Passion'

By KEN KUSMER
AP WRITER

The release of "The Passion of the Christ" is just days away, but anticipation is so strong that churches from Maine to California have struck deals to see the film in their local theaters ahead of time.

At the East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis, 2,400 tickets to Monday and Tuesday showings of Mel Gibson's graphic crucifixion drama disappeared quickly. The film premieres Wednesday—Ash Wednesday on the Christian calendar.

Senior Minister Derek Duncan didn't blanch at the \$23,000 cost, which the church picked up: He saw a unique opportunity to spread the message of Jesus. "I believe our society is so visual, so if you can see it—present it in that way—it might move you in a deeper way," Duncan said.

Other evangelicals have had the same idea, encouraged by the proliferation of testimonials, Web sites and books plugging the movie. Some pastors and Christian radio stations contracted with theaters for private screenings—many aimed specifically at conversion—well before the release date.

They're getting sneak peeks while interest builds in the \$25-million film, which Gibson co-wrote, directed and financed. His Icon Productions and distributor Newmarket Films said this week they've added 800 additional theaters to the original 2,000 to meet demand for advance tickets.

'Rings' receives 11 Oscar nominations

Merchandising deals are helping to stoke the fervor.

Bob Siemon Designs, producer of millions of WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) bracelets, is selling "Passion" lapel pins, key rings and inch-long nail pendants.



Senior Minister Derek Duncan of the East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis, Ind., talks of his church's decision to hold private screenings of Mel Gibson's controversial movie "The Passion of the Christ," Thursday, Feb. 19, 2004, in Indianapolis.

Bush wants to see Gibson film

President Bush wants to see the controversial new Mel Gibson film, "The Passion of the Christ," his spokesman said Friday.

Asked if the president wanted to see the Crucifixion drama, opening in U.S. theaters Wednesday, White House press secretary Scott McClellan said, "I think he does and I think at some point he probably will."

The White House has a private theater in which presidents can view first-run films.

Gibson directed, financed and co-wrote the movie, which tells the story of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It has become highly controversial even before its opening, with some claiming that it could spark anti-Semitism by making it seem that the Jews as a people were responsible for Christ's death. (AP)

Already, it has distributed 1 million "Passion" witness cards, inscribed with scriptural verses, said Dwight Robinson, a spokesman for the Santa Ana, Calif.-based company.

The Christian Booksellers Association screened the film Feb.

5 at a meeting in Indianapolis, and displays of "Passion"-related books, jewelry, artwork and other items have begun appearing in member stores. The CBA Web site proclaims "Gibson's Film May Be a Precursor to Revival."

It's a vision that pastors like

Duncan embrace. Those attending his church's three screenings, one Monday and two Tuesday at a nearby megaplex, will see a one-minute trailer with a personal message from Duncan before the "Passion" rolls.

As they leave, the moviegoers will be handed fliers inviting them to East 91st Street Christian, where a series of sermons over the next seven Sundays, concluding with Easter, will discuss themes such as the resurrection, the divinity of Jesus and the love of God.

"Sometimes we water down the story of the Bible in terms of Christ's suffering and what he went through," Duncan said.

Duncan is not among the thousands of pastors who have already seen the film - but he trusts the endorsements of those who have, including the Rev. Billy Graham and pastor-author Rick Warren.

"The momentum behind this thing is incredible," said Duncan, a professed movie-lover.

In one respect, the marketing of "Passion" to evangelicals and other Christians is no different than that of other films. Marketing is launched "initially with a core audience, people who have an affinity for the story and whose lives are affected by it," said A. Larry Ross, a spokesman for Graham who's also working with Icon Productions to promote the film.

On the other hand, a DVD sent to many pastors encourages them to build evangelization efforts around the film. Among its outreach ideas are block ticket purchases, "Passion"-related sermons, and distributing copies of the gospels to those who see the film.

Icon also has granted licenses for "Passion"-related merchandise, including a 160-page coffee-table book of movie stills, film-related framed art, and the International Bible Society's New Testament with images from the movie.

Mom struggles with questions from young son she gave up

By AVIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: At 19, I chose to give up my first child for adoption. "Billy" is now 5, and I have a great relationship with him and his adoptive parents. I've never regretted my decision.

We have been open about his adoption from the beginning. Billy often asks questions, much deeper than one would expect from a 5-year-old, and expresses some confusion. He understands that he came from my tummy but that he has his own parents. He knows that he is part of my family as well as his own, and when he met my mom, he chose to call her "Grandma." What Billy doesn't understand is why all his friends came from their mommy's tummies and he couldn't come from his adoptive mom's tummy. He also often expresses a desire for a brother or sister.

I am now engaged to be married to a wonderful man. We just found out that I am pregnant. I'd like Billy to be the ring bearer at my wedding, but I don't want to mislead anyone by introducing him and his family as "close friends of the family." We also don't want to overwhelm Billy with all this new information when he is struggling with so much confusion already. (Most of my extended family is not aware of Billy's existence.)

Also, since I'll be pregnant at the wedding and Billy knows he came from my tummy, a 5-year-old's deduction would be that he is finally getting a brother or sister. How do we explain that I loved him so much that I gave him to his mommy and daddy but I'll be keeping this baby?

BIRTH MOTHER IN PHILLY

DEAR BIRTH MOTHER: I know you are well-intentioned, but I urge you to rethink having Billy be a part of your wedding. Please consider the effect it would have on him to be introduced to your extended family for the first time at your wedding. Also, the question of why you would "give him away" and keep the other child is one that should be dealt with over time—and by his adoptive parents with support from you if necessary.

As he grows older, he will have more questions, and they should be answered honestly and at an age-appropriate level.

For now, however, I think creating some distance would be healthier for all concerned.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 17-year-old girl in my last year of high school. Throughout school I have made good grades and participated in the band as well as my sport outside of school.

My problem is this year I coach my sport twice a week in addition to playing on the team, playing in the band, and trying to keep my grades up for university and scholarship applications. On top of that, I have a full course load.

Abby, I can't do it all! When I get home at night, I'm so tired I can barely finish my homework or study for tests. My marks have begun to suffer, I'm having trouble sleeping, and I cry a lot. I have begged my parents to let me drop something, but they won't let me. I really want to do everything, but I can't.

How can I get my parents to understand?

TOO TIRED TO STUDY

DEAR TOO TIRED: Since your parents don't seem to be getting the message, find an ally to whom they will listen. Confide in a trusted teacher or school counselor, and ask that person to intervene for you before your stress level gets any higher. No one can do everything, and perhaps your parents need to hear it from an educator.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: May your heart always play a song of joy, and when there are tears, may they nourish the seeds of your dreams so that they grow into reality. (Author unknown)

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$10 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby - Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in price.)

Casino allegedly alters rules for Nelly

By DAVID A. LIEB
AP WRITER

A Missouri casino faces a possible \$50,000 fine for allegedly giving the rapper Nelly special treatment.

State regulators claim the President Casino on the Admiral let Nelly skirt rules intended to limit the amount of money patrons can bet. The Missouri Gaming Commission proposed the fine Thursday.

The commission alleges the casino violated some 10 state laws and rules while accommodating Nelly, who in the documents is referred to only as the "Patron."

The casino hosted a late-night birthday party last November for Nelly, whose real name is Cornell Haynes Jr. Regulators allege he and his eight-person entourage entered the casino without first getting the required electronic identification cards that limit gamblers to purchas-

ing no more than \$500 worth of gambling chips or tokens every two hours. Other rules also were broken, regulators say.

Gaming Commission executive director Kevin Mullally confirmed that the patron in question was Nelly. He said Nelly is not being targeted for penalties because it is the casino that is responsible for upholding state gambling laws.

The casino has 30 days to appeal the case to a state administrative hearing office, which

would gather more evidence and make a final recommendation to the Gaming Commission.

Ralph Vaclavik, President Casino's senior vice president and chief financial officer, said casino officials still are looking into the incident.

Nelly publicist Juliette Harris of Los Angeles said Nelly did not intentionally skirt Missouri's gambling policies.

The Grammy winner's hits include "Hot in Herre" and "Dilemma."

'Ed' ending despite campaign to save show

The creators of "Ed" are gratified for a "Save Ed" campaign, but it looks like they're moving out of Stuckeyville.

A group hoping to convince NBC to keep "Ed" alive ran a full-page ad in the trade newspaper Variety on Friday. The fourth season-ending episode

ran earlier this month, with characters Ed (Tom Cavanagh) and Carol (Julie Bowen) getting married at the bowling alley in fictional Stuckeyville, Ohio.

Series creators Rob Burnett and Jon Beckerman—who took on-air cameos as wedding guests—said it was their under-

standing with NBC executives that the series was over. They wrote the wedding episode to be a finale.

Still, they're grateful that fans have shown their loyalty.

"I don't know if I would tell them it's time to move on," Beckerman said. I guess I would say, 'a

sincere thank you,' but things are probably going to stay the way they are, which in some ways is very sad but in other ways isn't such a bad thing."

Burnett and Beckerman are writing a pilot episode for a new NBC series. Burnett joked that they're calling it "Ted." (AP)



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Weir, Maruyama tied for Nissan Open lead

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP GOLF WRITER



LOS ANGELES (AP)—Mike Weir's victory last year at Riviera was no fluke.

Neither was John Daly's victory last week.

Weir birdied five of his last seven holes Friday for a 7-under 64 that gave him a tie for the lead with Shigeki Maruyama, a share of the 36-hole record at the Nissan Open and hopes of joining idol Ben Hogan as a back-to-back winner at Riviera.

None of that seemed to matter to a gallery gone gaga over Daly.

Coming off a stunning victory last week at Torrey Pines — his first on the PGA Tour in nine years — Daly played even better in his round of 64 that left him only two shots out of the lead.

"It's a great feeling," Daly said. "I really didn't mis-hit a golf shot."

He wasn't alone on a cool, overcast day off Sunset Boulevard, where the average score was 69.76. Tiger Woods shot a 66 and didn't make up any ground, heading into the weekend eight shots behind Weir and Maruyama.

Maruyama, a member at Riviera, was only hopeful of making the cut and wound up with a 66. He and Weir were at 12-under 130, tying the 36-hole record set by Davis Love III in 1992.

Scott McCarron (65) and Briny Baird (62) were another shot back.

Daly also tied a record — most trips to the media center in one week.

He was as entertaining in 20 minutes with reporters as he was on the golf course.

Among the latest revelations:

□ He has lost 47 pounds since the start of the year. "I just went nuts at Christmas, ate everything in sight," he said.

□ He still hates flying commercial. "You pay for gas and hope you get there," he said.

□ He drives his customized motor home around the country, with three 42-inch plasma TVs.

□ Golfweek magazine reported that Daly is paying \$20,000 a month to two ex-wives for alimony and child support.

Weir came into the room and jokingly sat on Daly's lap. McCarron, who didn't play last week, was supposed to go skiing on Sunday until he saw Daly in the lead at Torrey Pines.

"I canceled my ski trip to stay and watch the golf tournament," McCarron said. "John Daly means a lot to golf, and I just hope he keeps going the way he's going now, because he's playing some great golf."

Weir isn't doing too badly, either.

He saved his round with a 40-foot par putt on No. 8 and, despite missing birdie chances on Nos. 10 and 11, played the toughest holes with ease.

Weir used to show up at Riviera and go home for the weekend. That all changed last year, when he got into a playoff with Charles Howell III and won on the second extra hole.

"I seem to have figured this course out," said Weir, who now has shot his last five rounds in the 60s at Riviera.

Woods got his act together, too, driving the ball better than he has in a while. Woods started the second round below the cut line, but removed any drama about making his 117th consecutive cut with two birdies on his final three holes that put him in a large group at 4-under 138.

"I might even lose ground," Woods said when he finished. "Just seeing 20-odd guys at 4 under or better for the day ... I didn't think the golf course was playing that easy, but evidently it is."

While some of the names atop the leaderboard are familiar, the scoring wasn't.

Riviera is one of the toughest tracks on tour because of its small greens with deceptive breaks. Weir



and Howell finished at 9-under 275. The cut this year - 1-under 141 - is five shots lower than last year.

"I didn't expect to be 12 under after two days," Weir said. "As you can see, the numbers are out there."

It was shaping up to be a fascinating weekend.

Weir knows all about the history at Riviera, known as Hogan's Alley. Hogan won three times in 1947-48, including a U.S. Open.

The Canadian is a huge Hogan fan, having read his books and studied his swing.

Everyone, though, seems to be a Daly fan. He kept the gallery in suspense over every shot and every putt, and the cheers resounded across Riviera. The loudest of the day came on his 8-iron to the par-3 sixth, which landed on a slight ridge and rolled to within 15 inches of the cup.

The ups-and-downs in his life are fascinating, and his golf is heading that direction. Daly doesn't mind the constant attention on the ex-wives, his occasional weight problems, the tales of drinking and gambling. Any other athlete might get heckling. Daly gets nothing but love.

"I just want to do good," he said. "My goal is not to make the same stupid mistakes that I made, and not trust some of the people that I've trusted in the past. It's life. You learn. You live and learn."

"Its just taken me a lot longer than most people."

Daly is liven' large at Riviera, only two shots out of the lead and plenty of possibilities awaiting on the weekend.

Defending champion Mike Weir of Canada, watches his drive on the sixth hole during the second round of the Nissan Open at Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles' Pacific Palisades area Friday, Feb. 20, 2004.
AP

Cardinals, Pujols finalize \$100M contract

JUPITER, Fla. (AP)—The Cardinals wanted to make sure Albert Pujols didn't get away.

One of the team's few homegrown stars in recent years, Pujols would have been eligible for free agency after the 2006 season. To keep him, the Cardinals gave Pujols a \$100 million, seven-year contract on Friday, a deal that would be worth \$111 million if St. Louis exercises an option for 2011.

"One of the best moments of my life," Pujols said. "It's great to be here today and not in Arizona. Everything was nice and smooth, everybody agreed on it. I'm just happy."

Pujols had been scheduled for an arbitration hearing Friday in Phoenix. Just 24, he hit a major league-best .359 last season with 43 homers and 124 RBIs. He topped the majors with 51 doubles and was second to San Francisco's Barry Bonds in National League MVP voting.

All at the bargain price of \$950,000.

"This deal not only recognizes Albert for his accomplishments over the past three seasons," general manager Walt Jocketty said. "But all along, we felt that it was important to retain a

player such as Albert who came up through our farm system, and see to it that he remained a part of the club's nucleus well into the future."

Since arriving in 2001 Pujols has hit 114 homers, matching Ralph Kiner's record for most home runs by a player during his first three seasons. He is the only player in major league history to bat .300 or better with 30 homers, 100 RBIs and 100 runs scored in each of his first three seasons.

Pujols is just the ninth baseball player to receive a \$100 million contract.

"The money will mean something in a small way with my family, but it won't change the way I play baseball," he said.

Cardinals chairman Bill DeWitt Jr. said the signing of Pujols is important as the team prepares to move to a new ballpark in 2006.

"Albert's accomplishments for the past three years are truly historic," DeWitt said. "Albert has a great work ethic and it epitomizes winning."

Pujols is expected to play first base, following the trade of Tino Martinez to Tampa Bay. Pujols spent most of last season in left field but has also played first base and third base.

Schilling likes Boston's title chances



FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP)—In Curt Schilling's mind, this revved-up round of the Red Sox-Yankees rivalry started with him.

With Boston still smarting over Aaron Boone's pennant-winning home run, the Red Sox went out and traded for the Arizona co-ace last Thanksgiving weekend. For the rest of the offseason, the Yankees and Red Sox tried to top each other.

"I think I was the first domino in the set to fall," Schilling said Friday. "The day that this trade happened, the first thing everybody did was look to New York and see what the reaction was going to be."

It didn't take long to find out.

Just six days after Boston obtained Schilling from Arizona, New York acquired pitcher Javier Vazquez from Montreal. Then, on Dec. 13, Boston signed free-agent closer Keith Foulke and New York traded for the Dodgers' Kevin Brown.

New York added outfielders Gary Sheffield and Kenny Lofton, and relievers Tom Gordon and Paul Quantrill. The Red Sox signed second baseman Pokey Reese and designated hitter Ellis Burks

And while Boston's attempt to acquire Alex Rodriguez fell through, the Yankees got the AL MVP from Texas last month.

"I love the thought that people are counting on me to be a huge part of winning a world championship," Schilling said.

Red Sox pitchers and catchers reported for spring training Friday, their first camp under manager Terry Francona, starting another year in which Boston tries to win the World Series for the first time since 1918.

Schilling was only 8-9 last season, missing six weeks because of a broken right hand, but had a 2.95 ERA and struck out 194 in 168 innings. But he went 23-7 in 2002 and 22-6 the year before that, helping Arizona beat the Yankees in the World Series.

Schilling had thought about what it would be like to have Rodriguez in Boston. If the deal had gone through, Boston would have sent Manny Ramirez to the Rangers and shortstop Nomar Garciaparra to the Chicago White Sox for Magglio Ordonez.

"It was a win-win for me. It was A-Rod and Magglio or Nomar and Manny," Schilling said. "I'm OK with a future Hall of Famer at short and in left."

At first, Schilling said he only was interested in being traded to the Yankees, or his former team, the Philadelphia Phillies. But Boston general manager Theo Epstein wooed him, and Schilling was enticed by the likelihood that Francona, his manager in Philadelphia, might succeed Grady Little.

Schilling compared his new rotation mate, Pedro Martinez, with Randy Johnson, his co-MVP of the World Series win.

"He's a guy who, barring an act of God, on the day he pitches, you're winning," Schilling said.

Boston led the majors last year with a .289 batting average and 961 runs and finished second with 238 homers. Its .491 slugging percentage set a major league record.

Martinez led the AL in ERA (2.22) for the fourth time in six seasons, and Derek Lowe and Tim Lincecum are still in the rotation. Byung-Hyun Kim could switch from the bullpen to the No. 5 starter.

"I'm excited about this team," Francona said, "like you can't believe."

Foulke's addition should solidify a bullpen that includes Mike Timlin, Alan Embree and Scott Williamson.

"We have defined roles and we have good players in those roles," Embree said.

Nets beat Raptors for 12th straight win

TORONTO (AP)—Jason Kidd tied a season-high with 15 assists and Richard Jefferson had 20 points to help the New Jersey Nets set a franchise-record Friday with their 12th straight victory, 91-72 over the Toronto Raptors.

New Jersey coach Lawrence Frank improved to 11-0. Frank set an NBA record for the best start to a coaching career by winning his 10th consecutive game on Wednesday.

"Any time you put a double-digit win streak together, that's impressive, but we have a bigger picture in mind. We want to get better," Kidd said.

Kerry Kittles added 19 points for the Nets, whose previous longest streak came from Dec. 23, 1982 to Jan. 12, 1983.

"I'm enjoying this, I really am, because I know what it was like when we were struggling," said Kittles, who is the most senior Net with eight seasons played. "We've had adversity, even this year, but more so in the past. I was on teams that were outmanned many nights."

Donyell Marshall had 17 points and 13 rebounds for the Raptors, who have lost four straight games.

Timberwolves 88, Pistons 87

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, new Piston Rasheed Wallace was on court 12 minutes in the first half before the NBA ruled he could not play because of a paperwork issue as Minnesota edged Detroit.

Kevin Garnett had 25 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Timberwolves to their fifth straight victory. Detroit has lost seven of its past eight.

Sam Cassell scored 16 and Latrell Sprewell had 12 for the Midwest Division-leading Timberwolves, who have won nine of their last 11 games.

Detroit's Chauncey Billups fouled out after reaching his second career triple-double with 20 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds. Richard Hamilton scored 24 points, Ben Wallace had 17 points and 12 rebounds and reserve Corliss Williamson added 12.

Pacers 96, Wizards 87

In Washington, Reggie Miller scored 11 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter, and Jamaal Tinsley hit two 3-pointers in the final 1:10 to give Indiana a victory over Washington.

Tinsley finished with a season-high 19 points and 10 assists. Jermaine O'Neal added 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Pacers, who overcame 22 turnovers to win for the fourth time in five games. Indiana played without forward Ron Artest, who is out indefinitely after tearing a ligament in his left thumb Tuesday against New Orleans.



New Jersey Nets guard Jason Kidd (5) drives to the hoop past Toronto Raptors guard Morris Peterson during first-half NBA action in Toronto on Friday, February 20, 2004.

Gilbert Arenas scored 27 points, and Juan Dixon had a career-high eight steals for the Wizards, who lost their fourth straight.

Jazz 92, Knicks 78

In New York, Andrei Kirilenko scored 23 points, and Sasha Pavlovic scored 16 from the starting shooting guard spot as Utah opened a big early lead in a win over New York.

Stephon Marbury scored 21 and Tim Thomas moved into Keith Van Horn's old starting spot at small forward and struggled on both ends of the court. He shot 4-for-11 and scored 17 points, 11 coming in the fourth quarter after the game had already been decided.

Utah, coming off lopsided road losses at Miami and Orlando, snapped a three-game losing streak using a new starting lineup.

Heat 125, Hawks 92

In Miami, Eddie Jones scored 24 points and Dwyane Wade added 22 as Miami built its biggest ever halftime lead en route to a victory over undermanned Atlanta.

The Hawks dressed nine players, then lost swingman Wesley Person after one quarter with a sprained right knee.

Jones had 20 points as Miami built a 73-42 halftime cushion. The Heat went ahead by as many as 33 points late in the second quarter.

Brian Grant scored 17 points and Lamar Odom had 10 points and nine rebounds for the Heat. Miami's 125 points were a season-high. The Heat led by as many as 42 points early in the fourth quarter.

Chris Crawford scored 21 points, Jason Terry 18 and Stephen Jackson 17 for the Hawks.

Cavaliers 89, Spurs 87

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 32 points and Zydrunas Ilgauskas made a key putback in the final minute as Cleveland snapped San Antonio's six-game winning streak.

Tim Duncan scored 21 points but the reigning two-time league MVP had an awful shooting night, going just 9-for-28 from the field.

Ilgauskas added 16 points and 12 rebounds for Cleveland, which won for just the second time in seven games. Jeff McInnis made two huge shots down the stretch and finished with 15 points and eight assists for the playoff-dreaming Cavs, who nearly threw it away in the closing seconds.

Magic 102, Nuggets 98

In Orlando, Florida, Juwan Howard had 24 points, and Drew Gooden added 16 points and 12 rebounds to help Orlando overcome Tracy McGrady's ejection to defeat Denver.

McGrady was ejected for twice kicking the basketball into the stands at the end of the first half.

On a night when he reached 10,000 career points, McGrady finished with 15 points—his fewest since going scoreless on Dec. 29 against New York, when he hurt his back in the first quarter.

Carmelo Anthony had 35 points for Denver, which had its three-game winning streak snapped. Nene had 15, while Marcus Camby added 12 points and 20 rebounds.

Grizzlies 97, Suns 92

In Memphis, Tennessee, Pau Gasol had 17 points, 10 rebounds and eight blocked shots

as Memphis handed Phoenix its seventh straight loss.

James Posey had a team-high 18 points for the Grizzlies, who won their third consecutive game and fifth in succession at home. Memphis has 21 wins at home this season, a franchise record.

Memphis' Stromile Swift scored 17 points, and Jason Williams and Bonzi Wells each had 11, but the two starting guards were a combined 10-for-24 from the field.

Amare Stoudemire led the Suns with 23 points, but fouled out with 4:28 remaining. Shawn Marion had 21 points and 11 rebounds. Joe Johnson finished with 12 points, but hit only four of 15 shots from the field and was 1-of-6 from outside the arc.

Kings 91, Bulls 83

In Chicago, Peja Stojakovic scored 24 points, and Vlade Divac had 11 assists and 11 rebounds to lead the depleted Sacramento past Chicago.

Their bench already thinned by an injury to Brad Miller and the suspension of Chris Webber, the Kings lost top reserve guard Bobby Jackson late in the first half with an abdominal strain.

Mike Bibby added 17 points for the Kings, who made 12 of 22 3-pointers — five by Stojakovic.

Jamal Crawford led Chicago with 23 points and Eddie Robinson added 16. Kirk Hinrich had 15 points and 10 assists.

Trail Blazers 94, Warriors 93

In Oakland, California, Zach Randolph scored 19 points and made a layup with 1.8 seconds remaining to lead Portland over Golden State.

Jason Richardson scored 22 points and hit a go-ahead jumper with 29.7 seconds left for the Warriors.

Portland won its second straight, beating Golden State for the first time in three tries this season.

Nick Van Exel scored 20 points for Golden State, hitting four 3-pointers, while Speedy Claxton had 18 points and six rebounds.

Lakers 116, 76ers 88

In Los Angeles, Shaquille O'Neal had 29 points and 13 rebounds as the Lakers downed Philadelphia.

Kobe Bryant added 28 points although he played just two minutes in the third quarter after picking up his fourth foul.

Philadelphia's Allen Iverson was held to 13 points on 3-of-18 shooting. He fell short of a third consecutive double-double with nine assists.

Kenny Thomas had 22 points and 12 rebounds and Glenn Robinson added 19 points for the 76ers, who are 2-17 in their last 19 games against the Lakers in Los Angeles.

Tribune Sports Scores

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New Jersey	33	20	.623	—
New York	26	30	.464	8 1/2
Miami	24	32	.429	10 1/2
Boston	23	33	.411	11 1/2
Philadelphia	23	33	.411	11 1/2
Washington	16	37	.302	17
Orlando	15	42	.263	20

Central Division

Indiana	40	15	.727	—
Detroit	34	23	.596	7
New Orleans	30	24	.556	9 1/2
Milwaukee	28	25	.528	11
Toronto	25	29	.463	14 1/2
Cleveland	21	34	.382	19
Atlanta	18	37	.327	22
Chicago	16	39	.291	24

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

Minnesota	40	15	.727	—
San Antonio	36	19	.655	4
Dallas	34	20	.630	5 1/2
Memphis	32	22	.593	7 1/2
Houston	31	22	.585	8
Denver	32	24	.571	8 1/2
Utah	27	29	.482	13 1/2

Pacific Division

Sacramento	39	14	.736	—
L.A. Lakers	34	19	.642	5
Portland	26	28	.481	13 1/2
Seattle	25	28	.472	14
Golden State	23	30	.434	16
L.A. Clippers	23	30	.434	16
Phoenix	18	39	.316	23

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

EAST

American U.	65, Holy Cross	51
Becker	90, Johnson St.	83
Brown	78, Penn	74
Bucknell	79, Lafayette	61
Carnegie-Mellon	86, Emory	79
Colgate	60, Navy	59
Columbia	66, Harvard	57
Cornell	69, Dartmouth	45
Cortland St.	71, Geneseo St.	59
Hartwick	71, Ithaca	69
Lehigh	68, Army	63
New Paltz	90, Fredonia St.	81
Potsdam	87, Oneonta	58
Princeton	70, Yale	58
Rochester	70, Case Reserve	56
St. John Fisher	67, Rochester Tech	65
St. Lawrence	99, Hamilton	91
Union, N.Y.	65, Vassar	59
Utica	78, Elmira	63

SOUTH

Berea	92, St. Louis Pharmacy	84
Centre	65, DePauw	61
Gardner-Webb	84, Campbell	69

MIDWEST

Augustana, S.D.	71, Minn.-Mankato	67
Bemidji St.	107, Southwest St., Minn.	82
Chicago	68, NYU	53
Coll. of the Ozarks	70, Peru St.	57
Grace	77, Vennard	68
Jamestown	98, Dakota St.	82
Nebraska-Omaha	81, North Dakota	69
Northwestern, Minn.	71, Minn.-Morris	67
Presentation	85, Martin Luther	70
S. Dakota St.	91, St. Cloud St.	69
Si Tanka-Huron	82, Mary	73
Simpson, Iowa	85, Cornell, Iowa	69
South Dakota	105, N. Dakota St.	96

SOUTHWEST

No scores reported from the SOUTHWEST.

FAR WEST

No scores reported from the FAR WEST.

TOURNAMENT

Lake Michigan Conference
First Round
Edgewood 71, Marian, Wis. 55
Lakeland 79, Maranatha Baptist 70
Wis. Lutheran 75, Milwaukee Engineering 70

SPORTS TRANSACTIONS

MLB

ANAHEIM ANGELS—Agreed to terms with RHP Francisco Rodriguez and C Wil Nieves on one-year contracts.

BOSTON RED SOX—Announced the resignation of Kevin Shea, di-

rector of media relations.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS—Agreed to terms with RHP Runelvys Hernandez, RHP D.J. Carrasco, RHP Miguel Asencio, RHP Kyle Snyder, RHP Brian Bass, RHP Joe Dawley, RHP Nate Field and RHP Brad Voyles, C Mike Tonis, OF Dee Brown, OF Byron Gettis, OF Rich Thompson, and OF Alexis Gomez on one-year contracts.

OAKLAND ATHLETICS—Promoted David Frost to assistant general manager and Billy Owens to director of player personnel. Agreed to terms with LHP Frank Brooks, LHP John Rheinecker, INF Freddy Bynum, INF Bobby Crosby, INF Dan Johnson, INF Graham Koonce, INF Mike Rouse, INF Marco Scutaro, RHP Justin Duchschere, RHP Chad Harville, RHP Justin Lehr, RHP Mike Wood, OF Bobby Kielty, OF Matt Watson, and C Adam Melhuse on one-year contracts.

SEATTLE MARINERS—Agreed to terms with RHP Cha-Sueng Baek, RHP Jeff Heaverlo, RHP Rett Johnson, RHP Aaron Loooper, LHP Bobby Madritsch, LHP Matt Thornton, INF Greg Dobbs, INF Ramon Santiago, INF Luis Ugueto, OF Jamal Strong and C Ryan Christianson on one-year contracts.

CINCINNATI REDS—Agreed to terms with RHP Matt Belisle, INF William Bergolla, RHP Juan Ceros, LHP Phil Dumatra, INF Edwin Encarnacion, RHP Josh Hall, RHP Luke Hudson, INF Tim Hummel, RHP D.J. Mattox and RHP Brian Reith on one-year contracts.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS—Agreed to terms with RHP Tim Bausher, RHP Jeff Bennett, LHP Jorge De La Rosa, RHP Ben Hendrickson, RHP Chris Saenz, C Kade Johnson, C Chad Moeller and OF Brady Clark on one-year contracts and with LHP Chris Michalak on a minor league contract.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES—Announced Chip Ganassi and William B. Allen have left the board of directors.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS—Agreed to terms with 1B-OF Albert Pujols on a seven-year contract.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS—Agreed to terms with INF Damon Minor on a minor league contract.

NBA

NBA—Fined Los Angeles G Gary Payton \$15,000 and Golden State G Speedy Claxton \$7,500 for their actions in a Feb. 18 game.

DALLAS MAVERICKS—Placed G Travis Best on the injured list. Activated G Tony Delk from the injured list.

DENVER NUGGETS—Claimed C Michael Doleac off waivers from Atlanta. Placed C Francisco Elson on the injured list.

DETROIT PISTONS—Activated F Tremaine Fowlkes from the injured list.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS—Activated F Brian Cook from the injured list.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES—Placed G Mike Miller on the injured list. Activated G Troy Bell from the injured list.

MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES—Activated C Michael Olowokandi from the injured list. Released G Darrick Martin.

ORLANDO MAGIC—Signed F Desmond Penigar to a 10-day contract.

TORONTO RAPTORS—Placed G Vince Carter on the injured list. Activated F Michael Bradley from the injured list.

COLLEGE

AUBURN—Announced RB Brandon Jacobs has decided to transfer.

CALDWELL COLLEGE—Announced the resignation of Sharon Ormsbee, assistant softball coach. Named Barbara Zafiris assistant softball coach.

DICKINSON—Named Brian Redding men's soccer coach.

MISSISSIPPI—Signed David Cutcliffe, football coach, to a two-year contract extension through 2007.

SMU—Announced it is dropping its men's track and cross country teams.

VERMONT—Named Kerry Dziczkaniec women's soccer coach.

WISCONSIN—Named Sue Ela interim director of women's crew.

By The Associated Press

The Week in Sports

NMASA fetes year's best

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY MARK RABAGO AND SHAN SEMAN, REPORTERS

The Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association got to honor last year's finest athletes in an awards banquet held last Thursday night at the Dai-Ichi Hotel Saipan Beach.

Swimmer Dean Palacios won the NMASA Male Athlete of the Year award following a silver medal-winning performance in the 400m individual medley event of the 2003 South Pacific Games in Fiji.

Julie Tokyo was adjudged NMASA Female Athlete of the Year after bringing home two silver medals in last year's Micronesia Cup held in Palau. She won her first medal in the discus throw, then got another in the javelin.

Junior netter Ralph Buenaventura got

the nod for NMASA Male Student Athlete of the Year after winning the men's 4.0 division of the Century Insurance Co. Tennis Classic last September.

Minerva Cabrera of swimming won the NMASA Female Student Athlete of the Year award after winning the ladies division of the shortened side event of the Escape From Managaha Island race held last October.

NMASA Coach of the Year went to Jeff Race of tennis after he spearheaded the CNMI to its best ever finish in last year's SPG.

Also honored during the ceremonies were NMI Sports Hall of Fame inductees Tony Rogolifoi of basketball, Mike Villagomez of swimming, and swimming coach Bill and Jean Sakovich.

NMASA president Mike White outlines his plans for 2004.



Sports supporter Jerry Tan congratulates the NMASA Athlete of the Year awardees as well as the nominees.



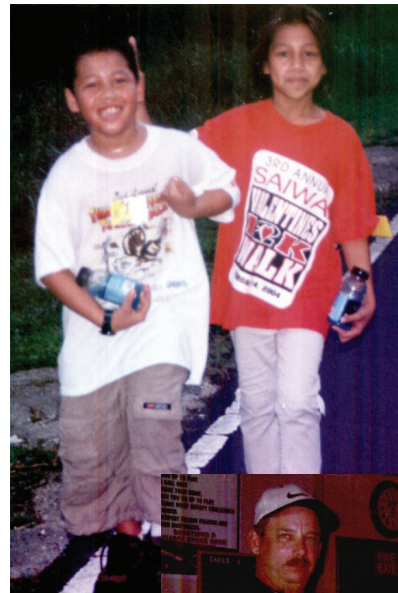
NMASA Athlete of the Year awardees, from left, Dean Palacios of swimming, Julie Tokyo of athletics, Minerva Cabrera of swimming, and Ralph Buenaventura of tennis.

NMASA Athlete of the Year awardees, nominees, and inductees to the NMI Sports Hall of Fame gather for a group shot.



Participants of the SAIWAI 12K Valentine's Walk gather at the starting point and end point of the event at Pau Pau Beach.

Kids join the fun in last February 14's SAIWAI 12K Valentine's Walk.



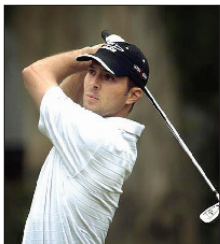
SAIWAI 12K Valentine's Walk participants from, left, Celine Encarnacion, Doreen Naidas, and Susan Gaspar.



Oscar Sablan of the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation drives baseline during the third quarter of last Tuesday's Mobil Oil Basketball Co-Ed Basketball Invitational against Tan Holdings Co. at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium. CUC won, 80-73.



Tuesday 8-Ball Fun Tournament winner Roger Espiritu strikes a pose for a photo with second place winner Joe Shaffer and Boyet Sequico at the Round Two Bar and Grill. From left are Shaffer, Espiritu, and Sequico.



Weir, Maruyama tied for Nissan Open lead

Mike Weir's victory last year at Riviera was no fluke. Neither was John Daly's victory last week.

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Saipan Tribune Sports

NMASA fetes year's best

The Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association got to honor last year's finest athletes in an awards banquet held last Thursday night at the Dai-Ichi Hotel Saipan Beach.

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28 SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2004

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

A hearty walk on Valentine's

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY MARK RABAGO
REPORTER

Over 60 people spent the early hours of February 14 in their jogging shoes and sweat pants taking part in a Valentine's Day walk organized by the Saipan Walking Association Inc. up in Marpi.

The event, so far, had been the longest walk organized by SAIWAI. Even though SAIWAI fixed three varying distances for the event, a majority of the participants opted to walk the full 12 kilometers that had participants start off from Pau Pau Beach, going north to Banzai Cliff, before hiking back again to Pau Pau Beach.

"It was tiring and fulfilling at the same time. It was pretty hard waking up early and walking 12 kilometers just like that. But once we finished, it was really a great feeling," said Hafa Adai Beach Hotel cashier Susan Gaspar.

Saipan Nippon Kogyo Corporation engineer Antonino Rivera couldn't agree more. "Everybody needs to go out and exercise once in a while. This morning's walk was certainly a treat and I'm looking forward to making this a weekly habit."

Doreen Naidas and Celine Encarnacion also appeared thrilled after joining their first-ever SAIWAI event. "It was a lot of work but at least I was able to complete the 12 kilometers," said Naidas.

"Being with friends actually made the long walk easier. I can't wait for the next SAIWAI event," said Encarnacion.

Aside from co-workers and groups of friends



Participants and SAIWAI volunteers pose in front of the short course turning point banner.

that joined the walk, the event, in keeping up with the whole theme of Valentine's Day, also drew not a few couples.

Among them were Joe and Salvacion Race, who are familiar faces in SAIWAI events.

"It's nice to celebrate the day of hearts like this way. You get to be with your loved one and exercise at the same time. It's really great for the heart," said Mrs. Race.

It was still dark when the first batch of walk-



ers registered at the SAIWAI station and set off from starting line. Going up to La Fiesta Mall served as a welcome warm up before proceeding north towards Marianas Resort and the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

After passing through those famous landmarks, participants then had to negotiate the *tangan-tangan* lined road going up to the Last Command Post and the Korean Memorial.

A full hour had passed before the tailend of the group finally reached the event's halfway mark at Banzai Cliff, where volunteers from the MDX Amateur Radio Club offered them refreshing energy drinks.

A few minutes after snapping shots with the trusty Nikon at the tourist spot, the weary walkers set off to complete the final six kilometers of the event. Participants had to overcome foot blisters, aching joints, hunger and the occasional urge to call it quits and hitchhike home.

Retracing their steps with the sun at its full morning strength, they reached Pau Pau Beach a half hour after 8am. There, they were greeted by SAIWAI volunteers and offered snacks comprising of mini cakes, chocolate chip cookies, oranges and more energy drinks.

"The 12-kilometer walk is a great gimmick for Valentine's Day. It gives participants another full two kilometers to enjoy the walking experience. Although we had six and 10-kilometer courses, most of them choose to walk the longer one," said SAIWAI spokesman Mario Espeleta.

Joe and Salvacion Race smile for the camera.

Participants take a brief rest at the halfway mark of the walk at Banzai Cliff. Second from right is PDI general manager Yoichi Matsumura.

